AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) Method for producing slabs in a continuous casting installation (10) with an oscillating casting mold (11) and a downstream strand guide (20, 22, 23) below it, comprising the steps of: bending a ~~in which the~~ cast strand (12) ~~is bent~~ from a ~~the~~ vertical casting direction into a ~~the~~ horizontal rolling direction; supporting and conveying the cast strand during bending ~~and during this process is supported and conveyed~~ by driver rolls (21, 24), which include straightening driver rollers and are arranged opposite each other in pairs, are adjusted relative to each other with well-defined contact force and can be combined into segments; deforming~~, wherein~~ the cast strand (12), while it is still within the continuous casting installation (10) in an ~~the~~ area of the straightening driver rolls (24), ~~is deformed~~ by at least one reducing stand (30) to a reduced strand (12') with a reduced thickness relative to its cast state; subsequently cutting~~, after which~~ the ~~continuous~~

reduced strand (12') ~~is cut~~ into slabs (12''); and conveying the slabs~~, which are conveyed~~ to a soaking furnace (40) and then to a rolling mill, ~~wherein~~ the step of deforming ~~deformation of~~ the cast strand (12) to the reduced strand (12') is carried out at an early point in time after its complete solidification at a surface temperature on the order of 1,000°C in such a well-defined way with high energy input and low thickness reduction of, for example, a maximum of 7 mm at a cast strand thickness of 50 mm that

• the depth of ~~the~~ oscillation marks (17) present in a ~~the~~ surface (16) of the cast strand is reduced, and

• as a result of the introduction of the higher energy state into a ~~the~~ deformed surface zone (18') of the reduced strand (12'), whose effect extends as far as a ~~the~~ region of ~~the~~ aligned dendrites, an ~~the~~ original finely crystalline structure of the surface zone (18) of the cast strand (12) is partially recrystallized in a small inner zone (19) in such a way that this zone (19) then expands into a completely recrystallized surface zone (19') of the slab (12'') in a ~~the~~ subsequent heat treatment in the [[a]] soaking furnace (40).

2. (Currently amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the deforming step ~~deformation~~ is carried out with one or

more reducing stands (30) with roll diameters of 600 to 900 mm, and preferably with a roll diameter of 700 mm, for the reduction of a cast strand 50 mm thick by a maximum amount of 7 mm.

3. (Currently amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein a ~~the~~ desired preliminary section can already be exactly adjusted in the continuous casting installation with the reducing stand (30) by preshaping its rolls (31) and by feedback of the rolling parameters to be set with the downstream rolling mill.

4. (Currently amended) Method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein, when several reducing stands (30) are used, only a minimal ~~slight~~ reduction of the cast strand (12) with high dimensional accuracy of a ~~the~~ desired preliminary section or reduced strand (12') is carried out with the last pair of rolls (31).